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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

January 1994
Vol. 47 No. 5



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

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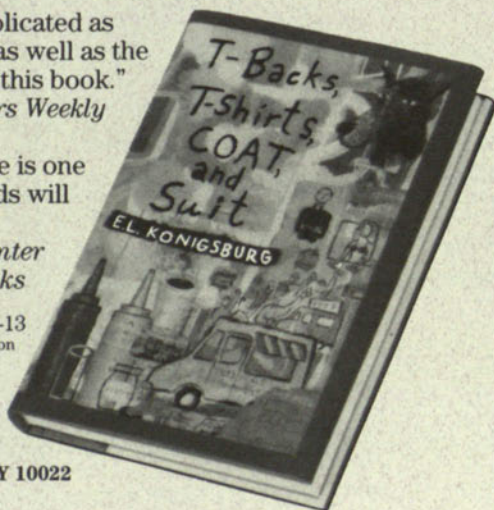
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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Vol. 47 No. 5



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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

From Sea to Shining Sea

compiled by Amy L. Cohn

It's gratifying when an author has the experience, knowledge, and standards to get it right, especially when the book is a big, lavish production that needs sturdy underpinnings to justify its expense. Cohn's compilation promises to be one of those family or classroom classics that covers enough ground to satisfy many tastes and uses. More than a hundred and forty stories, songs, and historical essays are organized into fifteen sections that range from Native American creation myths to twentieth-century highlights such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. In between comes literature reflecting experiences of immigration, the Revolution, Appalachian settlement, seafaring, slavery, building railroads, and pioneering. Other sections are genre- rather than subject-oriented: trickster tales, nonsense, animal stories, tall tales, baseball lore, and ghost stories.

Illustrating the various segments is a lineup of superstars whose styles mesh amazingly well because of the spacious book design and carefully orchestrated flow of material from page to page and section to section. Fourteen Caldecott Award or Honor artists ranging from Molly Bang to Ed Young are well matched to corresponding texts: Trina Schart Hyman, for instance, exercises her mischievous tendency in the trickster tales while Jerry Pinkney takes on the African-American section, John Schoenherr is a natural for the animal stories, Richard Egielski injects humor into the immigration section (as does Anita Lobel into the Revolution), the Dillons stylize some stunning graphics for the Native American myths, and David Wiesner shows dramatic versatility with railroad stories (see this month's *Bulletin* cover).

There's obviously lots to pore over here, with a balance of familiar pieces ("Take Me Out to the Ball Game") and unfamiliar ones ("The Mezcla Man"); folklore ("Brer Possum's Dilemma") and children's literature ("Dakota Dugout"); famous writers (Zora Neale Hurston) and those whose creations have superseded their reputations (James Stephens, who originated Paul Bunyan); funny legends ("The Debate in Sign Language") and sad ones ("La Llorona, the Weeping Woman"); surprising bits ("The First Woman to Vote in the State of California") and dramatic ones ("Strong as Annie Christmas"). There's also a consciously balanced ethnic distribution, a full quota of strong women as well as men, and a fearless embrace of the elements children crave and adults worry about—the controversial, the supernatural, and the downright scary.

So, as the lawyer says to the devil promising partnership in exchange for a few souls, what's the catch? There really isn't much of one except for an occasional case of "traditional" material that isn't attributed to any printed or oral source—"The Tory's Conversion," for instance, or "The Travels of a Fox." Some of the

selections list an adaptor but no sources from which the story or legend was retold; others, however, are meticulous, as in Ashley Bryan's "The Cat's Purr," cited to the early twentieth-century collector Elsie Clews Parsons. For the most part, Cohn's notes and acknowledgments give exemplary background, along with thoughtful suggestions for further reading or listening and a paragraph of information about each illustrator.

What particularly distinguishes this collection is not its usefulness and beauty, both of which are undeniable assets, but its character, which is an elusive quality shaped by the selection and editing process. Every anthologist, in trying to define her subject, defines her own understanding of it, and Cohn has revealed a distinctive perception of American story in its broadest forms and formats.

Betsy Hearne, *Editor*



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ANGELOU, MAYA *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*; illus. by Jean-Michel Basquiat; ed. by Sara Jane Boyers. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1993 32p
ISBN 1-55670-288-4 \$14.95

R 6-9 yrs

The presence of an editorial credit on the title page seems to indicate that Boyers is responsible for this melding of Angelou's poem, originally published in 1978, and Basquiat's paintings, created throughout the early 1980s. It's an apt if arresting synthesis, far more effective than most of the artsy picture books that have been regularly coming down the pike. "Panthers in the park/ Strangers in the dark"—Angelou's poem, really a chant, catalogs a host of spooky possibilities and banishes them with the iterated affirmation, "Life doesn't frighten me at all." It does, though, and that's why we need the poem. Basquiat's images capture this same contradiction: they're both scary and intensely vulnerable, with childlike scratches and scrawls and totemic stick-figures facing a dangerous world. The poem is firmly rooted in childhood; the art is New York street-sophisticated and sometimes sadly crazy, but kids will recognize their own drawings and imaginings in these pictures and should be able to see the bravery that drives the images. RS

ATLAN, LILIANE *The Passersby*; tr. by Rochelle Owens; illus. by Lisa Desimini. Holt, 1993 86p
ISBN 0-8050-3054-9 \$13.95

M Gr. 9 up

Obscure, introverted, and *très* French, this meditation on the legacy of the Holocaust has a Kabbalistic basis, according to a prefatory note by the author and the translator. The book is divided into ten "doors and praises"; throughout, an adolescent girl, *No*, struggles with anorexia in postwar France, as well as with the expectations of her mother, *I'm dying*, and father, *God does a bad job, I'll take over*. (The family's last name is *But I'll get out of it*.) A similar parallel between self-starvation and the Holocaust was drawn in Hautzig's *Second Star to the Right* (BCCB 9/81), but Atlan's book more closely resembles in its ritualism the darker reaches

of Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*. Unfortunately, *The Passersby*, while brief, is essentially plotless, crowded with label-names, and thematically tough going. The writing has occasional vividness, but it sometimes verges on self-parody, with a lot of single-sentence paragraphing: "No has received her bachelor's degree and has had a relapse. ¶Dr. *Out of control* no longer hesitates. ¶To the insulin. ¶It is in a room where neither the door nor the window has a handle that she writes her first poem, and it is called 'Rage.'" C'est la guerre. RS

BARNES, JOYCE ANNETTE *The Baby Grand, the Moon in July, and Me*. Dial, 1994 [128p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1600-1 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1586-2 \$14.99

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-7

Annie is ten, thrilled to death about the upcoming Apollo mission, and eager to see Neil Armstrong (whose last name is the same as hers) be the first person to set foot on the moon. While she dreams of being an astronaut, her brother Matty wants to be a jazz musician, and to this end he purchases an expensive piano on the installment plan and has it delivered to the Armstrong home. This action causes a rift between Matty and his father that seems unbreachable, but Annie, with the help of a reclusive old man in the neighborhood, manages to present Matty's love of music to her father in a way that makes him finally understand the power of his son's dreams. The dream-deferred theme is softened here by the loving, sometimes nostalgic, portrait of a close African-American family, with narrator Annie an energetic and credible force for good. The lunar metaphor is a bit belabored, but kids won't mind; the drama of family tensions, love of music, and sibling loyalty will keep them engaged. DS

BAUER, MARION DANE *A Taste of Smoke*. Clarion, 1993 [144p]

ISBN 0-395-64341-4 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Caitlin's been looking forward to her annual camping trip with her college-aged sister Pamela, but she soon gets a disappointed feeling that this trip is going to be different: all Pamela can talk about is some boy she's met at school and worse, it turns out that the boy, Alex, will be hanging around during what was supposed to be their private, sisters-only vacation. So Caitlin is pleased to discover a boy of her own at the state park . . . until she realizes that he's a ghost. The chief attraction of this romance/ghost story is that it never goes quite where you think it's going to. Frank, the ghost of a boy killed in a terrible fire a century before, at first seems a friend to Caitlin, but it gradually—and scarily—becomes clear that he is also a threat. Alex, too, can see Frank, but he won't admit it to Pamela and leaves Caitlin and her "crazy" stories to hang in her sister's disbelieving scorn. With tensions both supernatural and familial, the novel is expertly menacing and surely paced. RS

BOULTON, ALEXANDER O. *Frank Lloyd Wright: Architect; An Illustrated Biography*. Rizzoli, 1993 128p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-8478-1683-4 \$24.95

Ad Gr. 9 up

Called in the preface "the greatest American architect of all time," Frank Lloyd Wright created architectural triumphs such as the Robie House in Chicago, the

Imperial Hotel in Japan, Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Wright also lived through personal scandal from his marriage and affairs, and he refused to restrain his frequent arrogance about his own abilities. The account of Wright's life and accomplishments is rather sophisticated for most young readers, with occasionally convoluted sentences: "But to Baptists who generally believe in the necessity of personal redemption to release oneself from the turbulence of a sinful world, and to Unitarians, who presume an essential harmony between spiritual and earthly realms, the differences between their faiths can be stark indeed." It's also a bit elliptical, with no straightforward statement that Wright's father and mother divorced or that Wright himself stopped seeing his children from his first marriage. The illustrations, ranging from fascinating planning sketches to photos of completed projects and pages from Wright's own books, generally seem placed more for visual effect than conceptual relevance, but are enriching nonetheless. Ultimately a rather adult look at Wright, this is still a useful reference, and the high picture-to-words ratio and attractively open format make it a pleasure (if a pricey one) to leaf through. Source notes (on the copyright page), glossary, bibliography, and index are included. DS

BROOKE, WILLIAM J. *A Brush with Magic*; illus. by Michael Koelsch. HarperCollins, 1993 137p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022974-8 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022973-X \$15.00 R Gr. 5-7

In this fantasy set in ancient China, a peasant finds a baby floating downriver in a basket and, lacking milk to feed the child, discovers that a goat has magically appeared. It is years before Liang's adopted father will admit that the magic that happens around them comes from the pictures young Liang paints with his brush, his only possession. When one day a court painter comes to Liang's small village, the boy is tempted to look at the great man's paintings, and he discovers the irony that art is the "ability to look at something and then paint it in a way that looks nothing like it." The villagers finally admit that Liang has a magical gift when he paints fireworks that become real enough to knock down part of a mountain, thereby stopping a flood that is threatening the village. Liang's gift is discovered by the emperor, who wants to keep the boy busy painting gold coins that drop off the paper into the delighted ruler's hand. This simple satire on greed is also a story of Liang's struggle to grow up and accept his magical talent as part of himself ("It is your gift. Use it well"). Brooke's style is clear and focused, and the plot moves quickly. Unfortunately, the author gets in the way when he adds a heavy-handed addendum ("Our task, our joy is to recognize our seed of magic and to nurture it . . ."). If readers can ignore the final lecture, they will revel in the unique fantasy based on a familiar Asian folktale motif. KJ

BROOKS, BRUCE *Making Sense: Animal Perception and Communication*. Farrar, 1993 74p illus. with photographs (Knowing Nature)
ISBN 0-374-34742-5 \$17.00 R Gr. 5 up

Third in Brooks' Knowing Nature series (see also *Nature by Design* and *Predator!*, BCCB 1/92), *Making Sense* explores, in animals, the traditionally categorized senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, but cautions that senses are slippery and simultaneous and add up to another sense that is generally only attributed to humans: knowing. As in the previous Knowing Nature books, concepts come before

categories, a real departure in nature study books for children. Instead of a Noah-like parade of animals, each described in the sum of its senses, Brooks looks at "Seeing," for example, and gracefully bounces from blue jays to terrapins to man-drills in a discussion of color and reproduction. Elsewhere, an explanation of echolocation in dolphins, whales, and bats will extend readers' understanding of the topic to principles of animal behavior in general and the physics of sound waves in particular. Packed with surprising examples, the book has a vibrantly synthesizing approach, matched by the clarity and wit of the writing and ennobled with generous conclusions: "The message 'Here I am' is always answered by the environment, which pins an alert animal in a cross fire of scents and breezes and sounds and sights and thus replies immediately by saying, 'Yes, here you are.'" Color photos (with pungent captions: "There's not much doubt about what this gray wolf is feeling, or what it wants you to feel") add detail; a glossary and index are appended. RS

COHN, AMY L., comp. *From Sea To Shining Sea: A Treasury of American Folklore and Folk Songs*. Scholastic, 1993 400p illus.

ISBN 0-590-42868-3 \$29.95

R* All ages

See this month's Big Picture, p. 145.

COIL, SUZANNE M. *Mardi Gras!*; illus. with photographs by Mitchel Osborne. Macmillan, 1994 48p

ISBN 0-02-722805-3 \$15.95

R Gr. 2-5

Mardi Gras, says Suzanne Coil, is "not just something to watch, but something to be a part of," and this book's full-bleed photographs of otherworldly costumes, multicolored exotic floats, and alluringly dangerous night scenes will invite readers to do just that. The text talks about the history of Mardi Gras, its contemporary traditions, and the massive organization necessary to pull it off (including the cleanup brigades), and it includes saucy details such as the origin of the official Mardi Gras song "If Ever I Cease to Love" (it had been the favorite, for romantic reasons, of a visiting Romanoff grand duke). The real story lies in the glittering images from veteran Mardi Gras photographer Osborne, as joyous pagan abandon, spiced with a little bit of scariness, seizes young and old and dances them through the streets in "the most fabulous party on earth." Aside from being a seductive look at an unusual holiday, this'll up the ante for school carnivals. DS

COMAN, CAROLYN *Tell Me Everything*. Farrar, 1993 156p

ISBN 0-374-37390-6 \$15.00

R Gr. 7-10

"Suspended was how she often felt, though she hadn't, until then, had a name for it." Ever since her mother was killed while rescuing a boy in a mountain accident, Roz has felt detached, her only real emotion tied to her uncle Mike with whom she now lives, and to Nate, the rescued boy, to whom she makes silent and anonymous phone calls. But when Roz is suspended for hitting a classmate, when Nate's phone is disconnected, when she gets her period—Roz decides that all these are signs and decides to journey from her Cape Cod home to New Jersey and talk to Nate in person. There are points in the novel that seem self-conscious, with the fact that Roz was conceived in a rape being unnecessary freight, and the detailed and introspective prose has the feel of adult fiction, with many motifs recalling

Bobbie Ann Mason's *In Country*. As with that book, the heart of this one is the love between niece and uncle united in loss, both scared to admit their mutual vulnerabilities. Their memories of Ellie, Roz's mother and Mike's sister, are an angelic, if sometimes fuzzy, presence; while we never really get to know her, we do see how that presence helps Roz and Mike to come to understand each other. Even though she does seem older than the twelve years specified here, Roz is a thorny, compelling protagonist whose attempt to find peace is both obsessive and quite moving. RS

DENIM, SUE *The Dumb Bunnies*; illus. by Dav Pilkey. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1994 [32p]

ISBN 0-590-47708-0 \$12.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad 4-7 yrs

Let's hope the book's dedication to the late James Marshall means that author "Sue Denim" and illustrator Pilkey (a team à la Edward and James Marshall, perhaps?) intend it as an homage rather than a rip-off; the Dumb Bunnies are the Stupids in pink fur. With prose that mimics Harry Allard's cadences for the Stupids, and pictures that resemble Marshall's more than they do anything else Pilkey has illustrated, this is the story of the Bunny family, who are really stupid, I mean, dumb: "Momma Bunny's porridge was too cold, so she blew on it. Poppa Bunny's porridge was too hot, so he put it in the oven. But Baby Bunny's porridge was just right, so he poured it down his pants." Kids will love the dumb jokes, but the silliness is more forced than inspired, and the Bunnies' encounter with Little Red Goldilocks is shamelessly inane: "Poppa Bunny loved her so much, he danced a merry dance. Momma Bunny loved her so much, she sang a merry song. And Baby Bunny loved her so much . . . he flushed her down the merry toilet." "Toilet" will always get you a laugh, of course, that's easy. What's hard is what Allard and Marshall managed that this book does not: they made us laugh at and love the Stupids in equal measure. RS

DONNELLY, JUDY *Survive! Could You?*; written by Judy Donnelly and S. A. Kramer; illus. by Gonzales Vicente. Random House, 1993 95p (Read It To Believe It!)

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-94363-3 \$9.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-84363-9 \$2.99

R Gr. 3-6

In this choose-your-own disaster guide, readers are confronted with a series of scary scenarios: avalanche, shark attack, tornado, quicksand, tidal wave, earthquake, and shipwreck. Each chapter, written in the second-person present tense ("Above you, a huge sheet of snow is beginning to slide down the mountain"), outlines the conditions for disaster, describes the hazards to be faced, and, through a series of multiple choice questions, asks readers how they would handle the crisis. "What do you do if you can't get away from a shark? A. Face it and stare into its eyes. B. Put your head under water and blow bubbles. C. Hit it on its nose, its gill, or its eye. D. All of the above." Kids will be vicariously thrilled to discover that D is the correct answer, so thrilled that they'll stick around for the next paragraphs which tell them how not to get into such a situation to begin with. The writing is easy and immediate, the advice is sound, and both new-ish and reluctant readers will take the bait. A note from the publisher indicates that a different version of the book was published by *Weekly Reader* in 1988. RS

DORROS, ARTHUR *Radio Man: A Story in English and Spanish*; written and illus. by Arthur Dorros; Spanish translation by Sandra Marulanda Dorros. HarperCollins, 1993 40p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021548-8 \$15.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021547-X \$16.00 R 5-8 yrs

A young boy, Diego, travels with his family, itinerant farm workers following the western harvests from Texas to Washington state. His friend David calls him "Radio Man" because he is always listening to the radio. Time and again, Diego leaves and meets his friends and relatives (David and he part the day after the story begins) as his family takes a job, completes it, and then moves on to look for other work. Diego's family's life is hard, but they share their fortune. For the whole family in the field, the radio provides music for pleasure and diversion in the truck at the end of the day, and for celebrating the end of a season. The radio supplies continuity and constancy for Diego, for his relatives, and for the story, and it unites Diego and his friend David at the end. Written in English at the top of the page and translated into Spanish at the bottom, the story has a short concluding Spanish-to-English glossary. The illustrations, done in brilliant acrylics on alternate pages to the text, are deceptively simple; at first glance they look primitive, with childlike drafting and stiff, flat characters fixed in mid-movement, but more careful observation reveals that composition, expression, and color are all chosen to create an authentic atmosphere. The bright colors warm the story as the radio warms the lives of the characters. CF

DUFFY, JAMES *Radical Red*. Scribner's, 1993 152p
ISBN 0-684-19533-X \$13.95 R Gr. 5-7

It's 1894, and twelve-year-old Connor O'Shea is intrigued by the suffragists who are campaigning in Albany for their right to vote in New York state. Connor's father, a sergeant in the capitol police and a pawn of the local senator, is displeased by the "crazy women" and tries to keep his daughter away from them, but as he falls deeper into drinking and abuse of his wife both Connor and her mother become involved in the cause. Although the story is somewhat predictable, Duffy includes important historical details that slighter books about suffrage ignore: that the struggle involved women from classes other than the middle, that many men were unable to vote as well, that politics was a matter of influence as much as franchise, and that many Americans had grown up in countries where they could never have dreamed of voting. The characters are simple rather than deep, with Susan B. Anthony and some of the local suffragists more heroic than human, but Connor is still a plucky and engaging young lass, and her story of courage makes for a good read. DS

DURELL, ANN, ed. *The Big Book for Our Planet*; ed. by Ann Durell, Jean Craighead George, and Katherine Paterson. Dutton, 1993 136p illus.
ISBN 0-525-45119-6 \$17.99 Ad Gr. 3-6

Like *The Big Book for Peace* (BCCB 10/90), this is a children's-book-world version of a Live-Aid concert, with numerous luminaries contributing their talents to a good cause and their proceeds to a selection of conservationist organizations. It's a worthy project to be sure, but the submissions, all newly solicited, vary in appeal and quality, with a few having a desultory air, others being preachy, and some, especially among the nonfiction and the poetry, rising above the written-to-order genesis. Seymour Simon contributes a fine piece on the importance of wetlands,

and H. M. Hoover's "The Mushroom" is a lyrical meditation on the giant mushroom that spread across underground acres for centuries, finally destroying a new mall and exacting ecological retribution for the havoc humans had wreaked above. X. J. Kennedy's earthworm limerick ("Said an earthworm to me, 'Beg your pardon,/ May I bore a few holes in your garden?/ It may seem to you odd/ That I'd chew through a clod./ But I don't want our planet to harden'") is a fresh complement to more sober contributions by Jane Yolen and Myra Cohn Livingston. Rosemary Wells' "The Deep Green Gift" is an illustrated sermonette that does justice to neither its subject nor its audience, while William Sleator's "Traffic" is an effective enough science fiction story that seems for older readers than does the rest of the collection. In short, an attractively illustrated, cleanly designed grab-bag, probably of more interest as a souvenir for children's librarians than as a cohesive anthology for children themselves. RS

FARENTINOS, ROBERT C. *Winter's Orphans: The Search for a Family of Mountain Lion Cubs: A True Story*; illus. by Shannon Keegan. Roberts Rinehart, 1993 64p Trade ed. ISBN 1-879373-40-8 \$19.95
Paper ed. ISBN 1-879373-53-X \$13.95

R Gr. 3-7

A wildlife biologist tells the true story of the rescue of a litter of mountain lion cubs after their mother is killed by a local resident on the Colorado Front Range. In a fluid, somewhat verbose, first-person narrative the author recounts the story of setting traps, watching for the animals, and capturing them for placement in a rehabilitation center. The story is sympathetic to the plight of the cubs and drives home the point that humans must learn to live with the other animals that inhabit their environment. About mid-book, the storyteller has a dream in which he is able to imagine the experiences of the largest cub from the time its mother is killed to an encounter with a very unfriendly male mountain lion. The segment is probably intended to make the story more meaningful by telling it from the cub's point of view, but as with many attempts to get inside another species' head, this crosses into anthropomorphic territory: "Lanthito began to dream of waking up in the morning to a big breakfast of redbird served up by his mother." Realistic pencil drawings amplify the text with pictures of the storyteller, his cabin, and his appealing dog Tiki, not to mention the cubs. The dream sequence is illustrated with watercolor paintings of the cubs and their habitat, and throughout the book, the drawings of the animals capture their expressions and movements with precision and empathy. CF

FEELINGS, TOM, comp. *Soul Looks Back in Wonder*; comp. and illus. by Tom Feelings. Dial, 1993 34p
ISBN 0-8037-1001-1 \$15.99

Ad Gr. 2-4

Margaret Walker's opening "Mother of Brown-Ness" sets the tone for subsequent selections by a dozen poets, including Maya Angelou, Lucille Clifton, Alexis De Veaux, Langston Hughes, and Walter Dean Myers. These are consciously tailored to fit Feelings' brown-toned art, which is spiced with occasional geometric flashes of color and with paper-collage, marbled, or air-brushed effects. Message is the medium here; the book is intended to celebrate and foster African-American pride of creativity, and it does so with strong impact despite verbal and graphic clichés. Kids will enjoy reading these aloud, especially the ones with fresh imagery of the kind Angelou projects: "Popcorn leaps, popping from the floor/ of a hot black skillet/ and into my mouth./ Black words leap, snapping from the white/ page. . .

I love the book and the look of words/ the weight of ideas that popped into my mind." BH

FLETCHER, SUSAN *Dragon Kyn*. Atheneum, 1993 213p
ISBN 0-689-31880-4 \$15.95

R Gr. 7-10

On Kara's world, vermillion fever is deadly. They say she died of it when she was four winters old, but that a dragon nursed her back to life in her burial cave. Since then, Kara has had the uncanny ability to call down birds from the sky. Others in her "steading" (community) despise Kara's gift until King Orrik summons her to call down dragons for him. Under her king's orders to make him into a dragon-slaying hero, Kara struggles with her conscience. Her dilemma builds as she gradually remembers her connection to dragons and as the King's political motivations for heroism become more complex. This is a solid fantasy in a medieval Scandinavian-like setting, and there's plenty of drama, romance, and knavery to keep genre fans happy. KJ

FRADON, DANA *The King's Fool: A Book about Medieval and Renaissance Fools*; written and illus. by Dana Fradon. Dutton, 1993 40p
ISBN 0-525-45074-2 \$14.99

R Gr. 3-5

Fradon, author of *Harold the Herald* (BCCB 10/90), here introduces youngsters to another important character in medieval and renaissance life: the fool. Frambert, a fictional but typical court jester, tells contemporary students in a museum all about his confrères-in-folly and their lives. To have a fool, Frambert says, was like having "your own private comedian to amuse you, cheer you up, and even give you wise advice," and he explains who could be fools and what they would do ("There were male fools and female fools . . . giant fools and dwarf fools . . . learned fools who specialized in clever wordplay"). The account captures well the peculiar power of the jester's position, where one could speak one's mind freely to the king when nobody else dared, but where one also slept on the floor with the spaniels. Fradon also acknowledges that some kinds of humor popular then are no longer acceptable ("Today, you know it's rude and unjust to ridicule or laugh at people with disabilities or infirmities") and that fools were sometimes victimizers as well as victimized. The line-and-wash art, strongly reliant on royal purple, shows cheerfully cartooned fools of all sizes, shapes, and costumes capering and wise-mouthing as speech balloons sometimes continue the main text and sometimes offer contrapuntal opinions (keep an eye out for the dogs, whose thoughts display some dry common sense); simple footnotes are indicated by colored dots rather than numbers, which helps pack the pages with vigorous detail. This is a good introduction to one of the more fascinating historical roles, and it's a nice alternative to jousting lore for those kids likelier to enjoy hey-nonnny-no than bloodshed. DS

GARNER, ALAN *Once Upon a Time, Though It Wasn't in Your Time, and It Wasn't in My Time, and It Wasn't in Anybody Else's Time*; illus. by Norman Messenger. Dorling Kindersley, 1993 29p
ISBN 1-56458-381-3 \$12.95

R 4-7 yrs

Catching the rhythms, repetitions, and cumulations of traditional folktales, Garner tells three stories perhaps more notable for their formal effects than for their substance, but no less engaging for all that. In "The Fox, the Hare, and the Cock" a hare's been pushed out of her home by a fox, who responds "When I clump, ta-ra! When I thump, ta-ra! When I jump, ta-ra-ra! How the fur flies!" whenever

one of the hare's furry friends tries to get him to leave. But the cock has no fur, and what's more, is carrying a sickle: "Cock-a-doodle-do! Cock-a-doodle! I've a sickle on my shoulder! I shall cut the fox in two!" It does the trick. "The Girl and the Geese" is unmemorable, but the last, "Battibeth," is a surrealistic shaggy dog story in which a girl goes on her way to grandmother's house to exchange an egg for a knife, but she trips over a penny, loses the egg, buys a needle with the penny, has a blacksmith hammer the needle into a steeple, climbs the steeple and sees "that the egg had hatched into a cockerel and was threshing corn for a farmer in his barn." And that's just the beginning. The stories are brief and strongly structured, good for closing a story hour that's been on the strange side, while Messenger's cool, precise paintings reflect the rhythmic patterns of the narrative and echo the surrealism with a straight face. RS

GREENFELD, HOWARD *The Hidden Children*. Ticknor & Fields, 1993 [118p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-66074-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

"I realized at the time that our level of existence was worse than an animal. They had some protection, there were only certain months you could shoot them," says Jack Goldstein, one of more than fifteen Jewish Holocaust survivors Greenfeld interviewed for this book. All of them experienced World War II as hidden children: considered lucky not to have been killed or sent to concentration camps, conditioned almost reflexively to keep quiet, they have been less vocal than others about the experiences that robbed them of their childhood. Greenfeld laces together excerpts of autobiographical description with background narrative, organizing the whole into three sections that deal with the subjects' early exposure to Nazi persecution, the events of their hiding, and the act and aftermath of liberation. This process risks fragmentation of the subjects' stories but allows historical patterns to emerge more clearly. The book is carefully formatted to allow space for italicized quotes alternating with regular print and for photographs from the subjects' past. A reading list contains more adult than children's literature; an index will give students some access to factual references for specific research. BH

GREENLAW, M. JEAN *Ranch Dressing: The Story of Western Wear*. Lodestar, 1993 78p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-525-67432-2 \$15.99

R Gr. 4-7

Western hats, boots, and, of course, jeans have been around for awhile, and they're still popular as well as useful in their way. Greenlaw looks at these and other items of western wear and describes their invention, popularization, and contemporary role in fashion and work, examining the influences of the Old West, rodeos, and the movie and TV renditions of cowboy life. The text is occasionally a little excessive in enthusiasm or scope (Is western wear really "the most enduring fashion in clothing"?), but the clear description of duds and their uses makes for a pleasant read, and one that might serve to link histories of the West to a more contemporary viewpoint. The textbook typeface and unimaginative format give the book an unfortunately stodgy feel. Black-and-white photographs, some archival, some recent, are liberally scattered through the text, although they're frequently dark; a color insert gives a better idea of the flashiness possible in this simultaneously practical and showy style. A list of western museums, a bibliography, and an index are included. DS

GRIFFITH, HELEN V. *Doll Trouble*; illus. by Susan Condie Lamb. Greenwillow, 1993 [128p]

ISBN 0-688-12421-6 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

In *Caitlin's Holiday* (BCCB 10/90), Caitlin adjusted to the pleasures and problems of having a doll, Holiday, who was really alive; in *Doll Trouble*, Caitlin and Holiday, now firm friends, go through some rocky times when it appears that Holiday is stealing doll clothes from Caitlin's bossy friend Jennifer. It turns out that Caitlin's beloved former doll Jodi, now Jennifer's and ill-treated, has come alive too, so finally Holiday tricks Jennifer into giving Jodi back to Caitlin. Some of the plot twists are a little forced (such as the method by which the dolls come alive and Holiday's staging of a dream-sequence at Jennifer's house), but the charm of the secret friendship between girl and doll remains strong. Griffith taps unerringly into youthful jealousy and possessiveness in a way that kids will identify with; fans of the first book won't be disappointed. DS

GUIBERSON, BRENDA Z. *Salmon Story*; written and illus. by Brenda Z. Guiberson and with photographs. Holt, 1993 71p (Redfeather Books)

ISBN 0-8050-2754-8 \$14.95

R Gr. 3-5

"What has happened to the salmon, the fish that is so important to the people of the Pacific Northwest?" asks Brenda Guiberson. In a well-organized, though occasionally patronizing, narrative Guiberson gives an explanation of the salmon life cycle followed by a brief history of the importance of the salmon to Native American life. She then details the devastation of salmon habitats and reports on cannery and fish hatchery mismanagement over the past century, when the salmon have been slowly disappearing due to pollution, plunder, ignorance, and waste. The matter-of-fact discussion is hopeful despite the arresting facts; children will understand from this account that the salmon is in serious trouble but will also be aware that environmentalists and many others are using science and common sense to find ways to save the species. Neat, labeled drawings and effective photos in color and black-and-white illustrate the text, which is indexed. CF

HASELEY, DENNIS *Horses with Wings*; illus. by Lynn Curlee. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1993 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-022886-5 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-022885-7 \$16.00

R 5-7 yrs

No, it's not a retelling of the Pegasus myth, but it's in the same realm: Leon Gambetta outsmarted the Prussians in their siege of Paris by going not *through* the Prussians, but *over* them—in a hot air balloon. This is a simple picture-book account of that pioneering feat, showing young M. Gambetta lofted high above the city, blowing past a bored gargoyle, and floating south through the beauty and tranquility of the clouds, the "horses with wings." Haseley is less concerned with the military importance of the maneuver than with the idea of Gambetta's ballooning experience, which makes the book quite serene despite the grim basis for the excursion. The illustrations are stylized paintings on canvas, flattened and simplified in a way that echoes the freedom of the balloon but makes some odd juxtapositions with the text (the soldiers and horses are twice referred to as going through mud, but the ground seems quite pristine). The gently lyrical moments of the text are enhanced by the centering of the words on the page, which gives

them a free-verse look. A military anecdote made poetic, this captures a moment in history that will engage dreamers as well as warriors. DS

HODGES, MARGARET, ad. *Saint Patrick and the Peddler*; illus. by Paul Brett Johnson. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 40p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08639-9 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05489-6 \$15.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

In a retelling simpler than Ruth Sawyer's "The Peddler of Ballaghaderreen" and more elaborate than Joseph Jacobs' "Peddler of Swaffham," this is an Irish version of a story that many will know in its Jewish form, which Uri Shulevitz popularized in his picture book *The Treasure*. It's about a poor man who dreams three times that he must leave his humble cottage and go to a bridge in the city. There he waits until a prosperous man inquires about his quest and calls him foolish for following a dream; the prosperous man, after all, would never pay attention to his *own* dream about a treasure buried under a humble cottage. Naturally, the poor man hurries home and unearths the treasure. Saint Patrick's appearing in the dream makes the book a natural for Irish celebrations, while Johnson's paintings, though stiffly composed and over-glamorized in the nineteenth-century landscape mode, do have a lush rusticity that's true to the Irish countryside and even truer to a nostalgic recollection of it. BH

HOFFMAN, MARY *The Four-Legged Ghosts*; illus. by Laura L. Seeley. Dial, 1993 90p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1645-1 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1466-1 \$13.99

Ad Gr. 2-4

"Other boys had younger sisters who were a real pain, but Carrie wasn't." It's not her fault she's allergic to animals, and no one is happier than Carrie when Alex finally gets a tiny mouse for his birthday and offers to share it with her. Also, no one is more conspiratorially reliable when the mouse proves to be magic and starts summoning ghosts of all the animals who've ever lived in the house. Bats, rabbits, cats, dogs, a pony, etc., are one thing, but when a rhino, tiger, and angry elephant materialize from body parts that were stuffed or cut off by a big game hunter, a magician who boards with the family must intervene to reverse the work of what turns out to be a sorcerer's apprentice. The situation gets a little farfetched and more than a little contrived, but it's credibly detailed, with steady focus on a pair of goodhearted siblings along with their enterprising mouse: "Tomorrow he would decide what to do to make the children's lives more exciting again. After all, he knew lots of other spells." First published in Great Britain as *The Ghost Menagerie*, this is a pet fantasy with appeal for readers practicing on first chapter books, and there's that hint of a series in the last sentence. BH

HONEYCUTT, NATALIE *Lydia Jane and the Baby-Sitter Exchange*. Bradbury, 1993 117p

ISBN 0-02-744362-0 \$13.95

R Gr. 3-5

Lydia Jane is a third-grader with an inquiring mind: she wants to see what hail is like and discover how bats navigate by sonar and figure out how to patch the hole in the ozone layer. Unfortunately, she and her sister Gabrielle spend their time after school at the house of timid Mrs. Humphries, who's alarmed at any childish activities other than watching television. Lydia Jane proposes various braver caretaker alternatives (an au pair or Grandma), and she's finally gratified by becoming

the charge of a high-school girl apparently as inquisitive as Lydia Jane herself. Whether she's taking impressions of raccoon tracks (and there's a nice research plug for libraries in there) or roller-skating with her increasingly daring friend Juliet (see *Juliet Fisher and the Foolproof Plan*), Lydia Jane's doings are spontaneous and funny; her book is full of warmth and freshness that kids will enjoy. DS

JACQUES, BRIAN *Martin the Warrior*. Philomel, 1994 [375p]

ISBN 0-399-22670-2 \$16.95

Ad Gr. 4-7

Jacques has perfected his formula in this long-awaited book about the legendary warrior-mouse, Martin. What is disappointing is that Martin—the source of inspiration for so many of Jacques' animal heroes—is not bigger than the formula. Like the other heroes, Martin battles with a truly loathsome villain in order to free hundreds of innocent animal slaves. This time, the villain is named Badrang, and he controls a "vermin horde" (rats, stoats, ferrets, and weasels) in a fortress at the edge of the sea. Martin, who has suffered as one of Badrang's slaves, draws together an army of loyal followers (rabbits, mice, moles, squirrels, hedgehogs, etc.) that attacks and eventually defeats Badrang's horde. Surprisingly, Jacques, who typically describes gruesome deaths with enthusiasm, handles the death of Rose (Martin's true love) so gingerly that the reader is not certain she has died until she is buried a few pages later. The moral here: Martin's just another hero who puts his pants on one leg at a time like the rest of them. Burr, hurr. KJ

KALMAN, MAIRA *Chicken Soup, Boots*; written and illus. by Maira Kalman. Viking, 1993 34p

ISBN 0-670-85201-5 \$14.99

Ad 4-7 yrs

For short-order cook Barney March, "chicken soup boots" means chicken soup to go, and he's up at "half a yawn past dawn" to be the "morning greeter, counter-whizzer, white-apron wearer" at Joe Junior's Coffee Shop. Barney's is just one of the many jobs Kalman rhapsodizes over in her latest who-is-this-book-for-anyway picture book, paying visits as well to a world famous doctor of smellology, astronomer Venezuela Katz, fire fighter Lois Mingay, and barber Mr. Romeo Valentine "doing a snip-snap-snip." While the text is too long, rambling, and sometimes self-indulgent, it's a lot more fun than most career guides, and infectiously enthusiastic about vocation, "your job. Your work. Your it. Your you." If not as straightforward as the author-artist's *Sayonara, Mrs. Kackleman* (BCCB 11/89), the book is more authentically childlike than her Max the Dog books, and there's lots of goofy detail in both words and pictures, with portraits of hardworking people looking like post-modern icons. RS

KENDALL, RUSS *Russian Girl: Life in an Old Russian Town*; written and illus. with photographs by Russ Kendall. Scholastic, 1994 [40p]

ISBN 0-590-45789-6 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

RAIMONDO, LOIS *The Little Lama of Tibet*; written and illus. with photographs by Lois Raimondo. Scholastic, 1994 [40p]

ISBN 0-590-46167-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-5

These two photo-portraits, one of a prototypical child, the other decidedly not, take young readers to the other side of the world for a look at some very different

cultures. Kendall's Russian girl is nine-year-old Olga, who lives with her parents and brother in a town 150 miles east of Moscow. Olga goes to school, visits her grandmother's farm, does her homework, plays—in short, this is a gentle perestroika picture of how much “they” are like “us,” and it's quite well done, with both words and pictures (Kendall's photos are crisp and sunny) containing the particularizing details that American nine-year-olds will appreciate. *The Little Lama* is perkily introduced by the Dalai Lama, who writes “Lois Raimondo has produced a delightful children's book, based on the story of the reincarnation of my late tutor, Ling Rinpoche.” In this incarnation Ling Rinpoche is a six-year-old boy, already revered as a high lama and studying at the Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Dharamsala, heart of the Tibetan exile community in northern India. Ling Rinpoche's story is necessarily more complex than Olga's, and Raimondo focuses on the daily pattern of his life—studying, playing, blessing pilgrims and offering “advices”—while underplaying the religious beliefs that shape his destiny and the nature of the Tibetan exile. (The Dalai Lama's introduction and Raimondo's afterword will help adults with the context of both concepts.) Raimondo's photos are somewhat dark (a note explains that they were shot with available light), but show a bright, alert little boy surrounded by a host of loving monks, stuffed animals, and Legos. Both books include valuable supplementary material: Kendall's, some recipes, a Cyrillic alphabet, glossary, and a note to adults; Raimondo's, the Tibetan alphabet, a letter from Ling Rinpoche to American children, and a map. RS

KING, SANDRA *Shannon: An Ojibway Dancer*; illus. with photographs by Catherine Whipple. Lerner, 1993 48p (We Are Still Here: Native Americans Today) Library ed. ISBN 0-8225-2652-2 \$14.96 Paper ed. ISBN 0-8225-9643-1 \$6.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

ROESSEL, MONTY *Kinaaldá: A Navajo Girl Grows Up*; written and illus. with photographs by Monty Roessel. Lerner, 1993 48p (We Are Still Here: Native Americans Today) Library ed. ISBN 0-8225-2655-7 \$14.96 Paper ed. ISBN 0-8225-0641-5 \$6.95 R Gr. 4-7

Two more entries in Lerner's We Are Still Here series of photoessays (see also Peters' *Clambake*, BCCB 11/92) focus on two thirteen-year-old girls: Shannon, a Minnesotan Ojibway who participates in “fancy shawl” dances and competitions at regional powwows; and Celinda, a Navajo girl living in New Mexico and undergoing her Kinaaldá, a traditional girls' rite-of-passage ceremony. *Shannon* combines details of the girl's everyday life in Minneapolis' Indian community with her preparations for dancing; while the book has lots of engaging detail, it's also disorganized, and, unlike Ancona's *Powwow* (BCCB 5/93), never shows the protagonist performing in the competition for which she prepares. *Kinaaldá* is more straightforward, following Celinda through the two-day family rituals that prepare her for womanhood: praying, running to commemorate the first Kinaaldá (see Seymour's *The Gift of Changing Woman*, BCCB 11/93), making bread, being blessed and blessing others in return. Both books have a friendly, informal tone that emphasizes the fit of old customs into contemporary life; each also has clear color photos that are candid and unposed, with the pictures in *Kinaaldá* having both beauty and drama as the ritual unfolds against the desert landscape. Each book has a brief glossary and reading list. RS

KIRKLAND, GELSEY *The Little Ballerina and Her Dancing Horse*; written by Gelsey Kirkland and Greg Lawrence; illus. by Jacqueline Rogers. Doubleday, 1993 120p

ISBN 0-385-46978-0 \$14.95

M Gr. 4-7

Rosalie is eleven, and she loves ballet and riding her horse, Sugar; she's finding out, however, that "if you love to dance and ride as much as I do, it can make you really crazy. Like if you have to decide which one you love more." That happens when her ballet teacher tells her that riding interferes with her ballet progress. Her mother, whose dance career was cut short by a riding injury, also wants Rosie to stop riding; when she does, both she and Sugar are unhappy, until her uncle Max solves the problem by bringing her a sidesaddle, in which she can ride without interfering with her development as a dancer. At the heart of the story is a real dilemma with which kids may empathize (even as it suggests privilege that they'll envy), but the style is flat and rambling and the tale more than a little saccharine, with Rosie writing sentimental poems to her horse and an elfin old farrier telling of Sugar's great sadness at being ignored ("Why, a horse can die of a broken heart. I've seen 'em do it. They get a sadness inside, and they won't let go of it, and they won't eat nothin' either"). Undistinguished pencil drawings, some too dark for clarity, appear throughout. DS

KRAMER, S. A. *Adventure in Alaska: An Amazing True Story of the World's Longest, Toughest, Dog Sled Race*; illus. by Karen Meyer and with photographs. Random House, 1993 96p (Read It To Believe It!)

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-94511-3 \$9.99

Paper ed. ISBN 0-679-84511-9 \$2.99

R Gr. 3-6

Libby Riddles was the first woman to win the grueling Iditarod dogsled race in Alaska, and this account, taken from Riddles' own adult book *Race Across Alaska*, captures all the mile-by-mile danger, excitement, and drudgery. Kramer's present-tense narration is immediate ("Balanced on the runners, she drops off to sleep. Bam! She hits a tree branch!") and suspenseful, since readers aren't told in the beginning that Riddles is going to win. Sentences are short and extroverted, relying on lots of action verbs and sensory details to convey what's happening to Riddles *right now*. Occasional restrained pencil drawings and a few photographs accent the text without making it look too juvenile; a "Want to Know More?" section includes a few books and pertinent organizations; there's even an index, rare in paperback reluctant-reader fare. (For another "Read It to Believe It!" title, see Donnelly, above.) RS

LAUBER, PATRICIA *Be a Friend to Trees*; illus. by Holly Keller. HarperCollins, 1994 [32p] (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science)

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021529-1 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021528-3 \$15.00

Paper ed. ISBN 0-06-445120-8 \$4.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 1-3

"Trees are nice," begins Lauber, recalling Udry and Simont's picture book classic, and as she amply goes on to point out, trees are useful, both for the things that can be made out of them, and the things they make, i.e., maple syrup, fruit, nuts, oxygen. This is a notably comprehensive nature study book for primary graders;

facts, organization of material, and pen-and-watercolor illustrations are equally uncluttered. Along with the usefulness of trees to humankind, Lauber also covers their importance to the food chain, as animal shelter, and in the water cycle. Concepts are explained clearly and succinctly, and throughout, the book encourages observations, questions, and an ecological way of thinking. It's the kind of book that makes you want to take the kids for a walk in the park, where you'll both learn something new. RS

LEVENTHAL, DEBRA *What Is Your Language?*; illus. by Monica Wellington. Dutton, 1994 32p
ISBN 0-525-45133-1 \$12.99

M 4-6 yrs

An easy multicultural lesson for story hour, this song takes a little boy on a quick trip around the globe, beginning in England, ending in Spain, and making stop-overs in Germany, France, Russia, the Arctic, Japan, China, the Middle East, and East Africa. At each stop, the boy asks/sings the same question, "What is your language? Please tell me now," and the locals respond, "My language is German [French, Russian, etc.]. This is the way it sounds: *ja ja ja ja ja ja ja ja* [*oui, da, etc.*]. While the kids will like learning the word for "yes" in several languages (also "no," when the foreign pals tell the boy not to go), the song is pretty vacuous, and the tune even lacks the catchiness of "It's a Small World After All." The nostalgic, 'fifties-styled art is sweet and simple but trite, with smiley-faced UNICEF children engaged in "customs" such as dogsledding in the Arctic or flamenco dancing in Spain. The melody line with guitar chords is appended, along with a note on the languages; endpapers feature a world map labeling the oceans and continents (and Greenland) but not the countries mentioned in the book. RS

LISLE, JANET TAYLOR *Forest*. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 150p
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08653-4 \$15.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-06803-X \$15.95

R Gr. 4-6

For generations, two towns exist, top by bottom, and no one in either town knows anything about the inhabitants of the other until Amber, a human child from Lower Forest, spends the night in a treetop inhabited by mink-tailed squirrels of the Upper Forest. Considering the child an alien and an invader, the alarmed squirrels devise a plan to harass Amber. Meanwhile, her family, particularly her father, try to figure out why she has run away again. "Amber says people have started to like killing each other. . . . She says she can hardly stand it anymore," notes her younger brother Wendell. "That's a wonderful reason to run away at five-thirty on Sunday morning," answers Mr. Padgett. The town goes out looking for her, Mr. Padgett notices a lot of squirrels and gets his shotgun, and the battle is on. The incidents of escalating violence based upon misunderstanding, mistakes, and misinformation are chronicled in alternating chapters from the point of view of the peacemakers in each society: young Woodbine of Upper Forest and Amber and her brother from Lower Forest. The plot careens from event to event and carries the young peacemakers, the addlepated adults of both societies, and the reader to an exciting ending. Lisle has created a world of innocence marked with heartache, truth infused with absurdity, and wisdom relinquished to recklessness—all in the guise of animal fantasy. CF

LITTLECHILD, GEORGE *This Land Is My Land*; written and illus. by George Littlechild. Children's Book Press, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-89239-119-7 \$15.95 Ad Gr. 5-12

Less a picture book than a gallery of paintings, this is a collection of Canadian Cree artist George Littlechild's images drawing from, commemorating, questioning, and celebrating his heritage, both personal and tribal. The pictures are ceremonially iconographic, often overtly political, and include both historical and magical motifs, as in one called "In Memory of the Sioux Warriors," which shows a brightly costumed horse-man against an expressionistic night sky spotted with stars and jewels and little plastic horses. Although the collage elements of the original paintings don't always show up well in the reproductions here, the naive, poster-like (sometimes awkward) style and bold, eccentric (sometimes jarring) coloring are confident and immediate. Littlechild discusses each painting in a paragraph or two; while the notes tend to explain too much ("The red horse is taught that he is always wrong and whites are always right. That is why the check marks appear on the white horses"), they are honest and personalizing, linking the rhetoric of the art to the life history of the artist. RS

LLORENTE, PILAR MOLINA *The Apprentice*; tr. from the Spanish by Robin Longshaw; illus. by Juan Ramón Alonso. Farrar, 1993 101p
ISBN 0-374-30389-4 \$13.00 Ad Gr. 5-7

Arduino is a young Florentine in the Renaissance, eager to learn the secrets of art from a master. He soon finds, however, that apprenticeship is not what he dreamed: he cleans up the workroom, mixes pigments, sleeps on the floor, and never gets a chance to do anything artistic. He is shocked to discover that the Maestro keeps his former apprentice Donato chained in the attic, where the young artist has been for over a year since he displayed talent that rivaled the Maestro's. Fortunately Arduino saves Donato and the day when an important commission needs more attention than the sickly Maestro can give it, so Arduino convinces the Maestro to preserve his good name by freeing Donato to complete the work with Arduino's assistance. The characterization is slight and the plotting has some problems—the melodrama of the apprentice-in-the-attic story is excessive, especially since the grave and measured tone of the prose is unsuited to such high drama. More successful and appealing is the presentation of apprenticeship as a gritty and lonesome experience, with young men jealous of one another and yearning for their families. Readers may not realize just how many hands it took to make an Old Master, and this is an account that will give them a window into the Renaissance that they probably won't get in Art Appreciation. Stiffly drafted pencil drawings appear throughout. DS

MCCAFFERTY, JIM *Holt and the Cowboys*; illus. by Florence S. Davis. Pelican, 1993 40p
ISBN 0-88289-985-6 \$12.95 NR Gr. 2-4

"For a boy who loved the outdoors as much as Holt did, Plum Ridge was a great place to be." Sounds innocuous enough, but Holt is an African-American slave, and Plum Ridge is the plantation where he lives. Holt loves his master, and when he "heard that Colonel Hinds was going off to war, he was heartbroken," so Holt joins the Confederate Army as a cavalry scout, serves as "one of the bravest men in

the whole brigade," and then after a while goes back home to the plantation: "Mississippi is the place for me." Neither Emancipation nor the end of the war is mentioned, but when Holt's master—his "best friend"—is accidentally killed in a knife fight, Holt leaves to look for work in Texas, where he apparently experiences racial discrimination for the first time in his life. Here the story gains a slight tang of realism as Holt outsmarts the bigoted cowboys who set him on an intractable horse in order to teach Holt a lesson, but Holt tames the horse, gains the respect of the cowboys, and gets the job. This exercise in kinder, gentler history is supposedly based on true events, but no background notes are included, and the entire lack of historical context is unconscionable. While the book says that Mr. Hinds "owned Plum Ridge," it skips over the fact that he also owned Holt; likewise, you might need to tell young readers something the book forgets to mention: the South lost the war. RS

MACDONALD, CAROLINE *Hostilities: Nine Bizarre Stories*. Scholastic, 1994 [228p]

ISBN 0-590-46063-3 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

"Bizarre" seems the safest blanket term for these stories, since some are supernatural, others not, but they all deal with creepy and familial events. "The Dam" tells of a boy who stays with his aunt, discovering buried family secrets—and buried family. In "The Thief in the Rocks" the protagonist loses her parents to a girl who successfully impersonates her. "Hostilities," the best of the collection, describes a pair of stepsiblings who are not blending well at all. The writing is clear and straightforward ("From this moment, Jasper would have to be grateful to her for as long as she lived") and the plotlines intriguing, making this a good offering for reluctant readers; the combination of the supernatural and the all-too-human makes it a volume that might appeal both to kids who like ghostly stories and to those who don't. DS

MARK, JAN, comp. *The Oxford Book of Children's Stories*. Oxford, 1993 450p
ISBN 0-19-214228-3 \$25.00

R Gr. 7 up

This book of forty-four stories is chock-full of famous names in children's literature, but most contemporary children have never read Thomas Day, Catherine Sinclair, or perhaps even Kipling or Sandburg. Mark seems to have compiled with freshness and appeal in mind, however, because there are no old chestnuts here; the authors may be canonical but the included selections generally aren't, making this lively reading rather than a potted literary history. The old tales remain as compelling as ever. Who wouldn't want to know what happens to "The Ill-Natured Boy" of Thomas Day's, who seats a blind beggar in a dunghill and then attempts to feed the man morsels from it? Who could remain indifferent to Lucy Lane Clifford's unnerving "The New Mother," wherein two kids are so bad that they drive their mother away and receive a new mother with glass eyes and a wooden tail? More contemporary offerings come from Rosa Guy ("She"), Anne Fine (whose "Fabric Crafts" is one of the funniest entries), and Jan Mark herself. It's understandably a largely British/Commonwealth collection, but a few Americans (Louisa May Alcott and Lucretia Hale, for instance) make it in; interestingly, the newer stories are likelier than the old to tend toward sentimentality. Mark opens with a substantial introduction that briefly outlines the history of children's literature, and she finishes

off with source notes and a few further details about each story (although some of the notes are editorially eccentric) as well as a list of books for further reading and a few specialized collections, all of which make the volume professionally useful. Kids may not immediately take to the conservative-anthology look of the volume, but some of the entries would make for terrific readalouds for various ages, after which browsers may want to dip into the book on their own. DS

MEYER, CAROLYN *White Lilacs*. Gulliver/Harcourt, 1993 242p

Trade ed. ISBN 0-15-200641-9 \$10.95

Paper ed. ISBN 0-15-295876-2 \$3.95

R Gr. 7-10

It's in the midst of a civilized ladies' luncheon that Rose Lee, serving at the table, first hears about the plan to turn Dillon's black neighborhood, Freedomtown, into a park, exiling the families that live there to the wasteland at the edge of town. Loosely basing her novel on an incident that took place in the 1920s in Denton, Texas, Meyer focuses the history through Rose Lee, a twelve-year-old African-American girl who works alongside her grandfather for the Bell family, leaders in the drive to build the park and force out the residents by increasingly violent means. Rose Lee's recollective narration is understated, with even such events as an attack by the KKK given the controlled distance of memory. A gifted artist, Rose Lee gains the attention of Emily Firth, a white Yankee transplant who, in the eyes of the town, has some mighty dangerous ideas about integration, and who suggests to Rose Lee that she document the houses and churches of Freedomtown in her sketchbook before they are destroyed or moved. While Rose Lee is more observer than principle actor in the drama, she is a distinct presence, with a proud sense of self nowhere more in evidence than in her complicated friendship with Catherine Jane, daughter of the Bells. The girls' relationship—which moves from a secret childhood alliance (with Catherine Jane always retaining the upper hand) to the dynamics between a pampered daughter-of-the-house and her maid—gives the book a tension wire that links the sad events to the end, where Catherine Jane, not without a certain amount of self-congratulation, proves her mettle. RS

MÜHLBERGER, RICHARD *What Makes a Monet a Monet?*; Paper ed. ISBN 0-670-85200-7 *What Makes a Bruegel a Bruegel?*; Paper ed. ISBN 0-670-85203-1. Each book: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Viking, 1993 Paper ed. \$9.95 48p illus. with photographs (What Makes A . . . A . . .) R Gr. 6-10

Each entry in this attractive series focuses on one famous artist, examining in detail twelve important paintings and using them to discuss the artist's career. In *Monet*, for example, the paintings chosen show Monet's obsession with light, fascination with water, and interest in the family; in *Bruegel* the author mentions the artist's extensive use of detail and spiritual metaphor. Paintings generally appear once in full-page format and then several times in section or detail, which helps clarify the specific analysis in the text. The writing is sometimes quite sophisticated, with few definitions and no glossary, so the illustrations are crucial, but Mühlberger works through the paintings quietly and carefully and shows a reassuring willingness to admit that there are some paintings no one has figured out. Unfortunately the final "What makes a . . ." section is the weakest, with slapdash, oversimplified statements that seem to apply mostly to the painting on the endpapers rather than the artist's work as a whole. The books are helpful, detail-oriented art monographs rather than the guide to individuality that they promise, but they're good

companions to Greenberg's *The Painter's Eye* (BCCB 12/91) or Isaacson's *A Short Walk around the Pyramids* (BCCB 10/93), and they'd make excellent pre-museum trip reading. DS

MURPHY, JIM *Across America on an Emigrant Train*. Clarion, 1993 150p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-395-63390-7 \$16.95 R Gr. 7-10

The linchpin of this book is Robert Louis Stevenson's 1879 journey from Scotland to California to visit the woman he was to marry, but that's just a departure point for an examination and evocation of the emigrant experience. Stevenson's most individual response to his near-steerage ocean crossing and exhausting train journey across the country serves to convey that of millions, as Murphy adds to the writer's account with historical facts and other travelers' anecdotes, telling of awful meals and kind fellow passengers, train wrecks and emigrant fates in the New World. The combination of personal account and history, liberally seasoned with archival photographs and engravings, covers some well-trodden territory but takes a fresh look at it, bringing home how uncomfortable, frightening, and exciting the cross-continental journey was and how much labor it took from everyone to make it possible. This is a sound and vivid volume that makes for an appealing approach to U.S. history. There are no notes, but an extensive bibliography is included, as is an index and a detailed journey map. DS

OBERMAN, SHELDON *The Always Prayer Shawl*; illus. by Ted Lewin. Boyds Mills, 1994 34p
ISBN 1-878093-22-3 \$14.95 Ad 5-7 yrs

This personal history in picture book format is dominated by the emblematic prayer shawl that Adam receives from his grandfather before he and his parents sail across the sea from Russia to "a new country where everyone spoke a different language"—presumably North America, since the signs are in English. There he marries, grows old, and eventually passes on to his own grandson (and namesake) the prayer shawl that he has worn and mended until every part of it has been replaced except the truth of his grandfather's advice: "Some things change. And some things don't." It's hard to compress an entire lifetime into such a brief narrative without sacrificing vivid details. The story begins with specific descriptions about Adam's rural childhood "many years ago" but then telescopes his immigration, suburban, and retirement home experiences. Though the central theme ties it all together, the prose is sometimes choppy, and Lewin's watercolors—haunting in black and white—make an unexpected change to color without a clear rationale for the point of change. Nevertheless, the book will have great appeal in traditional Jewish communities and will offer multicultural primary-grade classrooms a reference point for discussion of family heritage. BH

PAULSEN, GARY *Harris and Me: A Summer Remembered*. Harcourt, 1993 157p
ISBN 0-15-292877-4 \$13.95 R* Gr. 6-8

The story begins as the unnamed hero, a friendless victim of alcoholic and abusive parents, bounces along in a 1949 pickup that's taking him to live on his uncle's farm. There, he meets the dirtiest farmhand he has ever seen and a family that eats, works, and sleeps with the unrefined intensity of backwoods heathens. This place has the pig poop, cowpies, muck, and acrid smells of which farms are really

made. More than that, it has Harris, a fearless, foolish boy who lures our thoughtful but still unschooled hero into entanglements with the environment that more often than not send the boys flying into the air while a bemused and unperturbed nature waits patiently for them to learn the rules. The boys turn pig pens into games of "GI Joe," play Tarzan from the hayloft, and emulate Gene Autry in an incident that leaves Harris with the breath knocked out of him and the reader breathless with laughter. Through it all, the lonely hero imperceptibly learns about belonging. Twain wrote ironically about a veneer of civility that covered a thoughtless and evil society of humans; Paulsen has created an opposite world. The farm life here is cruel, crude, and harsh with no nuances. There are bleating animals, profane expletives, and descriptions that will turn your stomach. But there is also hilarity, untamed confidence, genuine concern for others, and a belief in goodness—one of the most optimistic fictional worlds to invite young visitors in a long while. CF

PHILBRICK, RODMAN *Freak the Mighty*. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1993 169p
ISBN 0-590-47412-X \$13.95 R Gr. 7-10

Maxwell Kane is triply cursed: he's huge for his age, he's terrible at schoolwork, and he's the son of "Killer" Kane, who's currently in prison for murder. His life changes when Freak moves in to the house behind him; Freak, real name Kevin, is toddler-sized and walks only with braces and crutches but has an intelligence and arrogance that Max warms to, and together, with Freak riding on Max's shoulders, they make "Freak the Mighty," nine feet tall and equipped with superior intelligence. Freak's friendship and genius help save Max when his newly released father kidnaps him, but Max can't save Freak from the early death to which his limited body dooms him. The book is unsubtle but compelling, with the outrageous grotesquerie of the partnership conveyed enjoyably in Max's narration. The melodramatic excess of the kidnapping father makes for more plot than necessary, but the novel is full of unlikely extremes anyway, so involved readers probably won't mind. Sort of *A Separate Peace* meets *Of Mice and Men*, it's a sentimental story written with energy and goofy humor instead of sentimentality; without being put off by the emotion, kids will be drawn in by the idea and appreciate the story of an unusual relationship. DS

PLATT, RICHARD *Stephen Biesty's Incredible Cross-Sections Man-of-War*; illus. by Stephen Biesty. Dorling Kindersley, 1993 32p
ISBN 1-56458-321-X \$16.95 R Gr. 5-9

This followup to *Incredible Cross-Sections* focuses on a man-of-war, a ship modeled on Admiral Nelson's famous *HMS Victory*. Each spread takes you through another slice of the ship moving from the stern to the bow; the text not only describes the points depicted in the illustration but also addresses specific aspects of ship-board life ("Cooking and Eating," "Battle Stations," "Health at Sea"). The cross-sections are filled with intriguing details, including a stowaway hiding on board, a sailor stealing eggs, and decapitated human heads plunging into the depths during battle. While the drawings and format lack David Macaulay's clarity and some of the British puns will elude young American readers, the gallimaufry of nautical niceties (many pleasingly gruesome) is still absorbing as it evokes a rough and self-contained world from days gone by. An index and glossary are included. DS

RAIMONDO, LOIS *The Little Lama of Tibet*

See Kendall, p. 157, for review.

RANDOM HOUSE BOOK OF EASY-TO-READ STORIES. Random House, 1993 252p illus.

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-93438-3 \$18.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-83438-9 \$18.00

M 4-7 yrs

Where previous Random House anthologies (Prelutsky's *Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, BCCB 11/83; Pollack's *The Random House Book of Humor for Children*, 1/89, etc.) cast a wide net for their selections, the sixteen stories found here all come from various Random House beginning- and easy-to-read series. Those series have produced some classics (Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*, Eastman's *Are You My Mother?*) that unfortunately aren't found here, with Seuss being represented by some minor nonsense poems and Eastman's *Go, Dog. Go!* excerpted into the less-than-memorable "Dog Party." Other stories, such as Charlotte Doyle's "Freddie's Spaghetti," seem to be missing some pictures, and Katharine Ross' adaptation of "The Ugly Duckling" is incomprehensible. Better selections include Annabelle Prager and Tomie de Paola's "The Birthday Party" and Deborah Hautzig and Marc Brown's "Little Witch's Big Night," but even the success of these is vitiated by the collection's run-on format, each poem or story following the last without much of a visual break. An introduction suggests that parents can share the book with the pre-literate, who can later read from it themselves, but too many of the stories are too choppy or oblique for reading either aloud or alone. Besides, the joy of beginning-to-read books is in their tailored-to-small-hands format. RS

ROESSEL, MONTY *Kinaaldá: A Navajo Girl Grows Up*

See King, p. 158, for review.

RUPERT, RONA *Straw Sense*; illus. by Mike Dooling. Simon, 1993 32p

ISBN 0-671-77047-0 \$14.00

Ad 5-8 yrs

Beginning rather mysteriously with the three-word sentence "He never spoke" and moving on to the description of a boy who "lost his voice the night the forest burned down" and now lives with a woman "who called herself his aunt," this is a story that could have profited from some kind of scene-setting note. A mute newcomer to an unidentified village, the boy becomes engrossed by a neighbor's artistic creation of a scarecrow family to protect the surrounding strawberry fields. After lending a hand with the straw dolls, the boy eventually speaks: "My name is Goolam-Habib." There's a subtle drama to Goolam-Habib's development, and the paintings provide some richly textured background in the form of landscape and portraiture. From the back-flap bio, we can assume this takes place in contemporary rural South Africa, a location of interest to young listeners hooked on the human interest of the story itself. BH

SAN SOUCI, ROBERT D. *The Snow Wife*; illus. by Stephen T. Johnson. Dial, 1993 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1410-6 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1409-2 \$14.99

R 5-8 yrs

Kids intrigued by yetis will find this retelling of a Japanese legend eerily appealing:

it starts when a supernatural woman freezes an old woodcutter but spares his young companion, Minokichi, who later meets her in human form and marries her. Then Minokichi breaks a promise not to mention his wintry brush with death, whereupon he must trek past a threatening Mountain Man and cannibalistic ogress to win back his wife from the Wind God. The paintings are as coldly spooky as the story, with awesome demon-figures and impressionistic layers of color overcast by snowy white. Even the adaptation (no source cited) has a trace of cool wit: "Circumstances—a white hairy ogress to be exact—forced my disrespectful act," says Minokichi to the Wind God. Try this for variety at Halloween or any old time you need a ghost story. BH

SCOTT, ELAINE *Funny Papers: Behind the Scenes of the Comics*; illus., and with photographs by Margaret Miller. Morrow, 1993 90p
Library ed. ISBN 0-688-11576-4 \$14.93
Trade ed. ISBN 0-688-11575-6 \$15.00 Ad Gr. 3-5

The first half of *Funny Papers* contains a short history of comics as an original American art form and a flattering description of the work of Hank Ketcham, Charles Schultz, and Chic Young, among others. Charles Schultz' ego is healthy: "Peanuts will stop when he retires. 'No one continued to draw Picasso's pictures after he died,' Mr. Schultz says." The cartoonists mentioned most often are the patriarchs of comics, and young readers will be disappointed that their favorites (such as Gary Larson or Bill Watterson) are barely mentioned. In places, the text reads like a well-written but under-researched college paper ("The comics can make us laugh, and laughter is a wonderful thing") and young readers could lose interest before Scott hits her stride in the book's second half. There she tells how comics are published, from the initial creation to color separation (although all the photos are black-and-white) to distribution among thousands of newspapers. This section could be used in a school unit on newspaper publishing. Although the book is not as solid overall as Scott's earlier *Look Alive* (BCCB 9/92) on puppet animation, its popular subject exerts appeal. KJ

SEIBOLD, J. OTTO *Mr. Lunch Takes a Plane Ride*; written by J. Otto Seibold and Vivian Walsh; illus. by J. Otto Seibold. Viking, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-670-84775-5 \$14.99 R 4-7 yrs

Mr. Lunch, a dog, is an expert bird-chaser, so he's excited when a TV talk show host invites him—and the bird of his choice—to fly out and be on the show. Mr. Lunch is even more thrilled about the plane ride than the TV appearance, so he's disappointed when he and Ambrose (the bird) are put in with the *luggage*. The two do get up to some mischief, the results of which only become apparent when it's TV time, and Mr. Lunch finds several other fellow passengers—whose luggage he has mixed up—appearing as guests on the show. The jokes are easy to get and affectionately made; kids who have gotten into the wrong places will know just how Mr. Lunch feels. While the book has a sophisticated retro look to it, there's lots of child appeal here, in the story and in the goofy, busy pictures of Mr. Lunch's friends, his journey, and his eventual TV triumph. It's interesting that even while a note states that the pictures were made on a Macintosh, they have a lot more heart and all-around amiability than the art in many of the painstakingly handpainted but pretentious picture books we've been seeing so much of lately. The creamy page color and subdued hues help, but most of the credit goes to Mr.

Lunch himself, happily whizzing about the wacky landscape that Seibold (and Mac) have created for him. RS

SHANNON, GEORGE *Climbing Kansas Mountains*; illus. by Thomas B. Allen. Bradbury, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-02-782181-1 \$15.95 R Gr. K-3

On a white-hot summer afternoon Sam and his father drive to the edge of their midwestern town and climb to the top of the grain elevator, a Kansas "mountain," to peer down at the flat prairie below. Illustrator Thomas Allen's Kansas has a sky as blue as a basketful of cornflowers and a shimmering heat that envelops the buildings on Main Street, the towering grain elevator, and the flat farmland laid out in perfect squares to the horizon. Well-executed, if nostalgia-charged, charcoal drawings with pastels of blue and brown and a sheen of white create a breathless summer day and breathtaking views of ordinary places. Shannon's story reflects a cozy summer memory of a bonding experience between a boy and his father. It's more description than plot, but the tone is warm and intimate with childlike language and viewpoint: "All the way through town on one straight street, everything in the distance always wrinkled from the heat." From the "high quiet view," the pictures take flight while the words are snug and secure: "There were squares as smooth as fancy pants and squares plowed up like corduroy. . . . All held together like our tablecloth." CF

SIEGEL, BEATRICE *Murder on the Highway: The Viola Liuzzo Story*. Four Winds, 1994 [128p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-02-782632-5 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-9

Viola Liuzzo found a cause in the Civil Rights movement and almost immediately lost her life to it. Thus her story is really the story of the protest march from Selma to Montgomery, and Siegel spends the first four chapters describing the racist conditions leading up to that climactic event. Liuzzo herself—though obviously a complex individual with a history of impulsive behavior and some instability along with her intelligence and warmhearted generosity—seems a pawn of fate. "In the heat of the final arguments, Mrs. Liuzzo was almost forgotten," says the author about the murder trial. "It had become a case of white supremacy against the rights of African Americans." To some extent, then, we never get to know the white woman gunned down by the Klan, but we clearly see what gave her a place in history. This is a clean synthesis based on media reports, magazine articles, personal interviews, and FBI files. The foreword by Rosa Parks, the black-and-white newspaper photos, the epilogue discussing implications of the legal verdicts and federal involvement, and the bibliographical essay all enhance a carefully constructed account. BH

SOBOL, RICHARD *Seal Journey*; written by Richard and Jonah Sobol; illus. with photographs by Richard Sobol. Cobblehill, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-525-65126-8 \$14.99 R Gr. 3-5

A well-known photographer takes his eight-year-old son, Jonah, to observe a seal colony a hundred miles north of Prince Edward Island. On the ice, they watch a minutes-old pup, "still wet and yellow from its birth," along with fluffy whitecoats, one of which Jonah holds briefly before reboarding the helicopter at nightfall.

(Kids could have benefited from a mention that picking up baby wildlife isn't usually a cool thing to do.) There's quite a bit of information smoothly incorporated into the descriptions, including facts about harp seals' migration and life cycles: "The mother seals' milk is ten times richer than either cows' or humans' milk, and a well-fed pup will grow from twenty pounds at birth to almost eighty pounds by the time he is weaned at twelve days old." Of course, the book's *raison d'être* is Richard Sobol's color photography, which is crystal clear—and looks appropriately crystal cold. The pictures are appealing enough to doubly reinforce the book's conservation agenda: "Now protected by laws, for the first time in hundreds of years this seal nursery is filled only with the cries of the hungry pups and not the thuds of the hunters' clubs." Young listeners can use a real-life happy ending now and then. BH

STEARNS, MICHAEL, ed. *A Wizard's Dozen: Stories of the Fantastic*. Yolen/Harcourt, 1993 [192p]

ISBN 0-15-200965-5 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Thirteen new short stories by some of the most original fantasy writers for young adults comprise a wizard's dozen ("any magical number from eleven to fifteen"). Some are humorous, some are haunting, but the best are both. Alan P. Smale's "The Breath of Princes" is about a peasant girl who does her best to liven things up by making herself available to a marauding dragon. Patricia C. Wrede's "The Sixty-Two Curses of Caliph Arenschadd" is a tale of a ruler who threatens his subordinates with curses that he never learned how to remove. Dan Bennett's "The Way of the Prophets" is about a prince who stumbles onto a road filled with holy men and women ("the Knights of the Sensible Shoes," "the Sisters of the Half-Decent Meal"). Expectably, the most contemporary humor comes from Will Shetterly in "The Princess Who Kicked Butt." Stories with mostly ordinary kids who find magic in contemporary settings are by Charles de Lint, Tappan King, and Sherwood Smith. A few authors sacrifice meaning for brevity in, for example, "Efrum's Marbles" by Joy Oestreicher and "Harlyn's Fairy" by Jane Yolen. However, there is no meaning lost in the eerie "Lost Soul" by Vivian Vande Velde, in which a simple man gives up everything for a few hours with a seductive water sprite. Overall, this is a strong collection, with a pleasing variety of magical motifs. KJ

SUTCLIFF, ROSEMARY, ad. *Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of The Iliad*; illus. by Alan Lee. Delacorte, 1993 128p

ISBN 0-385-31069-2 \$19.95

R Gr. 5-9

With an exceptional blend of modern storytelling and classical epic style, Sutcliff has recounted the war between Greeks and Trojans, from Aphrodite's arrangement for Paris to meet and run away with Helen, through the long siege, to its bloody end. The chapters divide the complex story into readable chunks without sacrificing detail, while Lee's generously formatted watercolor paintings show as much respect for the strong stuff of gods and heroes as Sutcliff's narrative does. Consequently, the episodes and images retain their haunting hold as swift action unfolds the fate of proud Achilles, wily Odysseus, noble Hector, cowardly Paris, maddened Ajax, brave Penthesilea. Recommend this one to junior high school teachers coping with restless boys (it's a heavily male cast), or excerpt sections aloud in a book talk for the Dungeons and Dragons crowd. BH

TARR, JUDITH *His Majesty's Elephant*. Yolen/Harcourt, 1993 193p
 ISBN 0-15-200737-7 \$16.95 M Gr. 7-10

In this fantasy based on an historical anecdote, the emperor Charlemagne receives two gifts from the Caliph Haroun al-Rashid—an elephant and a golden talisman. The emperor's daughter, Rowan, knows there is something special about the elephant and its keeper, a prickly Breton boy named Kerrec. When the magic of the talisman is used by one of Charlemagne's enemies to make the emperor fall seriously ill, Rowan must acknowledge the magic that lies dormant in her to save him. However, Rowan's magic isn't enough—she needs to join forces with Kerrec and the elephant to form a powerful threesome. Rowan doesn't want to face her magic because then she'll be labeled a witch, as her mother was. It turns out that despite Rowan's Christian-based fear of magic, no one condemns her for using it, not even her aunt, the abbess. This drains the plot of tension, and since Rowan turns away from her innate power so much, it's anticlimactic when she finally uses it. The innovative development of Charlemagne and his elephant as characters does not cancel out the predictable outcome—Rowan and her partners in magic succeed in saving the emperor, and Rowan hesitantly admits her affection for Kerrec. Although an evil sorcerer's use of Rowan's sister as a pawn in his strategy is truly sinister and suspenseful, this is a thin plot spread over a long story. KJ

WHELAN, GLORIA *Night of the Full Moon*; illus. by Leslie Bowman. Knopf, 1993 63p
 Library ed. ISBN 0-679-94464-8 \$13.99
 Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-84464-3 \$13.00 R Gr. 3-6

Libby is excited at the prospect of visiting the village of her Potawatomi friend Fawn, so she's disappointed when her father, busy with the impending birth of the new baby, can't take her as promised. After telling her parents she's going out berry-picking, she secretly goes to the village, where, dressed in one of Fawn's outfits, she is mistaken for an Indian and forced by the U. S. Army to leave the village with the others to be "resettled" far away, across the Mississippi. Set in southern Michigan in the 1840s, this historical novel is easy to read and dramatically swift, as Libby tries to find a way to get back home to Saginaw before the Indians are taken too far. The treatment of Potawatomi culture is respectful without being anachronistic, and while the action at times stretches credulity, readers of the American Girls series and such will find pleasure in the details of pioneer and Indian life, the friendship between Libby and Fawn, and the exciting plot. Pencil illustrations are softly well drawn, and the cover painting of the two girls in the moonlit woods will attract genre fans. RS

WILLARD, NANCY *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1993 32p
 ISBN 0-590-47329-8 \$15.95 R 5-8 yrs

The team that produced *Pish*, *Posh Hieronymus Bosch* (BCCB 12/91) has set loose a mad menagerie of machinery, with Sylvia the sorcerer's apprentice overdoing her master's magic potion to help her with a sewing job ("Your first task is to make new clothes/ for all the creatures in my care—/ New caps, new capes, new vests and hose"). When the machinery starts multiplying, the magician awakes and breaks the spell; we leave ambitious, red-haired Sylvia on Mount Dragon's Eyes, learning magic at a more sedate pace. An assortment of strange but amiable crea-

tures surrounds her, "while Sylvia teaches them to say/ the spell she worked out yesterday/ for turning pencils into pails, and failures into fairy tales." The carefully controlled verse is vintage Willard, and the carefully controlled art is vintage Dillons. Both are more smoothly crafted than spontaneous, but the story itself has a certain intrinsic chaos that overflows the book's gold-bordered formality, asserting a tension that will assure kids' response to the inventive details of rhyme and illustration. A note attests to the tale's long history. BH

WOLFSON, EVELYN *From the Earth to Beyond the Sky: Native American Medicine*; illus. by Jennifer Hewitson. Houghton, 1993 96p
ISBN 0-395-55009-2 \$14.95 M Gr. 5-9

An intriguing subject and a handsome format reach out to readers who may nevertheless be puzzled by several aspects of the treatment. This is a book that cries out for footnotes to statements such as the second sentence, which claims that Native Americans "were almost disease-free before the arrival of European missionaries, explorers, trappers, and settlers" How do we know this, and where can we substantiate it? Organic cures are frequently outlined without comment: "When snakeroot plants were not available to cure snakebites, Native Americans cut up the offending snake and placed its flesh over the wound." Which Native Americans? Does it work? Should teenagers try it? Have scientists tried it? The fact that Native Americans used many effective remedies and understood the holistic nature of illness, treating emotional as well as physical manifestations, is a strong premise that is frequently well substantiated here. But distinctions between past and present procedures (tenses switch unexpectedly), the relative validity of those procedures, and even the nature of the procedures themselves are often vague: "The head of the society took the quartz crystal from the table and looked into the patient's body to see what made him ill. . . . Some members massaged the patient to get the illness out; others whipped the disease with an eagle feather; still others sucked it out with a special sucking device." This description raises more questions that it answers, while another assertion begs many questions: "If no cure resulted from the chant, the patient understood that it was because some part of the ritual had been omitted or the chant had been repeated incorrectly by the Singer." Statements can be sloppily generalized ("Raspberry bushes are easy to find because their stems have prickles"—but so do many other kinds of berries and bushes), while occasional passages are compromised simply by confusing grammar: "Native Americans preferred to be partially exposed rather than fully clothed, inviting the possibility of parasites and disease." From the look of the bibliography and the comprehensive scope of the information, Wolfson has done a lot of research here, but she has not clearly evaluated her findings. Glossary and index appended. BH

WORMSER, RICHARD L. *Three Faces of Vietnam*. Watts, 1993 157p illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-531-11142-3 \$13.90 R Gr. 7-12

Wormser's "Three Faces" view the war from three perspectives: the Vietnamese, the American servicemen and women, and the protesters back home. It's an effective organization of the material, proceeding chronologically from the 1950s and France's occupation of Indochina to the end of the war in 1975. The chapters on the Vietnamese are the most interesting, primarily because they follow the experi-

ences of a young Viet Cong sympathizer, Le Ly, as she becomes committed to the revolutionary cause, even after she is accused by her comrades of being a spy and is forced to leave her village. Chapters on the soldiers and protesters also contain much personal, anecdotal information, but it's spread over a larger cast and is consequently less involving. Still, the tone of the book never becomes dry, and facts about the conflict are always focused or exemplified through the often terrible personal experiences of individuals, making this a strong complement to more straightforward chronologies. Black-and-white photos, maps, source notes, reading list, and an index are all included. RS

ZEMAN, LUDMILA, ad. *The Revenge of Ishtar*; ad. and illus. by Ludmila Zeman. Tundra, 1993 24p
ISBN 0-88776-315-4 \$19.95 R 5-8 yrs

As she did in her first picture book adaptation of this epic cycle, *Gilgamesh the King* (BCCB 1/93), Zeman compresses an elaborate story into compact episodes, here the conquest by Gilgamesh and Enkidu of monsters threatening their magnificent city of Uruk. These episodes center on human vulnerability, for the beloved singer Shamhat dies during the monster's attack, and Enkidu dies as a result of the goddess Ishtar's anger over Gilgamesh's rejection of her marriage proposal. Thus at the book's end, Gilgamesh sets out for what must be his final conquest (and a sequel to this volume) over the worst monster in the world, death. The text is kept simple at both narrative and visual levels, running several lines to every long horizontal page, above which fiery double spread illustrations portray the battle scenes. These sequences find sudden relief in depictions such as the blue-tiled background for Ishtar's plotting secret revenge after her flying Bull of Heaven has been defeated. Zeman bases her graphic details on archaeological research and borders the art in skillfully rendered traditional Babylonian designs; she has also progressed beyond the slight cuteness of facial expression that sometimes appeared in her first book. This has a less uncommon story, but it's overall a powerful production that will prove good company for picture book presentations of Greco-Roman epics—such as Warwick Hutton's *The Trojan Horse* (BCCB 4/92)—or the d'Aulaires' collections of mythology. BH

BULLETIN BLUE RIBBONS 1993



A list of bestsellers is easy to compile: count the sales and go figure. The Bulletin Blue Ribbons list is a little harder to come by. Only the staff's inherent civility restricts our warfare to codes of chivalry as we read, argue, reread, defend, attack, and finally agree on a selection of children's books that goes beyond the standard criteria for excellence exemplified by many of the approximately six thousand children's books published this year. What characterizes a book for this list are special qualities of innovation, energy, or craft—the extra element it takes to imprint a book on three reviewers who have seen too many books in too short a time. Inherent in the process of selection is our knowledge that three other reviewers would make different choices. Ideally, every reader makes his or her own list. Here are some possibilities for yours.

PICTURE BOOKS:

- Emberley, Michael. *Welcome Back Sun*; written and illus. by Michael Emberley. Little. (October)
- Farber, Norma. *When It Snowed That Night*; illus. by Petra Mathers. Geringer/HarperCollins. (November)
- Goble, Paul, ad. *The Lost Children: The Boys Who Were Neglected*; ad. and illus. by Paul Goble. Bradbury. (June)
- Johnson, Paul Brett. *The Cow Who Wouldn't Come Down*; written and illus. by Paul Brett Johnson. Jackson/Orchard. (July/August)
- McDermott, Gerald. *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest*; written and illus. by Gerald McDermott. Harcourt. (June)
- Pomerantz, Charlotte. *The Outside Dog*; illus. by Jennifer Plecas. HarperCollins. (October)
- Say, Allen. *Grandfather's Journey*; written and illus. by Allen Say. Houghton. (September)
- Sis, Peter. *Komodo!*; written and illus. by Peter Sis. Greenwillow. (June)
- Stevens, Janet, ad. *Coyote Steals the Blanket: A Ute Tale*; ad. and illus. by Janet Stevens. Holiday House. (May)
- Trivizas, Eugene. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*; illus. by Helen Oxenbury. McElderry. (September)
- Wolff, Ashley. *Stella & Roy*; written and illus. by Ashley Wolff. Dutton. (July)

FICTION:

- Alcock, Vivien. *Singer to the Sea God*. Delacorte. (February)
 Anderson, Rachel. *Paper Faces*. Holt. (November)
 Hahn, Mary Downing. *The Wind Blows Backward*. Clarion. (May)
 Hodge, Merle. *For the Life of Laetitia*. Farrar. (March)
 Johnson, Angela. *Toning the Sweep*. Jackson/Orchard. (June)
 Kindl, Patrice. *Owl in Love*. Houghton. (October)
 Mori, Kyoko. *Shizuko's Daughter*. Holt. (May)
 Napoli, Donna Jo. *The Magic Circle*. Dutton. (April)
 Qualey, Marsha. *Revolutions of the Heart*. Houghton. (May)
 Sachar, Louis. *Marvin Redpost: Why Pick on Me?*; illus. by Neal Hughes. Random House. (February)
 Walker, Kate. *Peter*. Houghton. (June)
 Walsh, Jill Paton. *Matthew and the Sea Singer*; illus. by Alan Marks. Farrar. (May)
 Williams, Vera B. *Scooter*; written and illus. by Vera B. Williams. Greenwillow. (October)
 Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *Make Lemonade*. Holt. (July)

NONFICTION:

- Appelbaum, Diana. *Giants in the Land*; illus. by Michael McCurdy. Houghton. (September)
 Booth, David. *Doctor Knickerbocker and Other Rhymes*; illus. by Maryann Kovalski. Ticknor. (September)
 Brandenburg, Jim. *To the Top of the World: Adventures with Arctic Wolves*; written and illus. with photographs by Jim Brandenburg. Walker. (November)
 Carrick, Carol. *Whaling Days*; illus. by David Frampton. Clarion. (July)
 Cohn, Amy L., comp. *From Sea to Shining Sea: A Treasury of American Folklore and Folk Songs*. Scholastic. (January 1994)
 Freedman, Russell. *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*. Clarion. (October)
 Gardner, Jane Mylum. *Henry Moore: From Bones and Stones to Sketches and Sculptures*. Four Winds. (April)
 Hamilton, Virginia. *Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom*; illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Knopf. (March)
 Kuklin, Susan. *Speaking Out: Teenagers Take on Race, Sex, and Identity*; written and illus. with photographs by Susan Kuklin. Putnam. (October)
 Marrin, Albert. *Cowboys, Indians, and Gunfighters: The Story of the Cattle Kingdom*. Atheneum. (September)
 San Souci, Robert D., ad. *Cut From the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale*; illus. by Brian Pinkney. Philomel. (June)
 Turner, Ann. *Grass Songs*; illus. by Barry Moser. Harcourt. (June)
 Van der Rol, Ruud. *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary*; written by Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven. Viking. (November)
 Wallace, Karen. *Think of an Eel*; illus. by Mike Bostock. Candlewick. (May)
 Westray, Kathleen. *A Color Sampler*; written and illus. by Kathleen Westray. Ticknor. (September)

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this index, which appears in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

African Americans-fiction: Barnes;
McCafferty; Meyer

African Americans-poetry:
Feelings

Alaska: Kramer

Animals: Brooks

Anorexia-fiction: Atlan

Architecture: Boulton

Arctic regions: Sobol

Art and artists-fiction: Brooke;
Llorente

Art: Littlechild; Mühlberger;
Scott; Seibold

Ballet-fiction: Kirkland

Ballooning: Haseley

BIOGRAPHIES: Boulton; Siegel

Buddhism: Raimondo

Camping-fiction: Bauer

Careers-stories: Kalman

China-fiction: Brooke

Civil rights-fiction: Meyer

Civil rights: Siegel

Clothing and dress: Greenlaw

Comics: Scott

Cousins-fiction: Paulsen

Cowboys-fiction: McCafferty

Death-fiction: Coman

Disabilities-fiction: Philbrick

Disasters: Donnelly

Dogsled racing: Kramer

Dogs-stories: Seibold

Dolls-fiction: Griffith

Dragons-fiction: Fletcher

Ecology: Durell; Guiberson;
Lauber

Elephants-fiction: Tarr

Emotional problems-fiction:
Atlan; Coman

Everyday life-fiction: Honeycutt
FAIRYTALES AND FOLK-

TALES: Cohn; Garner; San
Souci

Families-fiction: Barnes

FANTASY: Brooke; Fletcher;
Griffith; Hoffman; Jacques;
Lisle; Stearns; Tarr

Farm life-fiction: Paulsen

Farm life-stories: Rupert; Shan-
non

Fathers and sons-stories: Shannon

France: Haseley

France-fiction: Atlan

Friends-fiction: Philbrick

Friends-stories: Dorros

FUNNY STORIES: Paulsen

GHOST STORIES: Bauer

Grandfathers-stories: Oberman

HISTORICAL FICTION:

Barnes; Duffy; Llorente; Meyer;
Whelan

History: Fradon; Platt

History, ancient: Sutcliff

History, U.S.: Duffy; Greenlaw;
McCafferty; Meyer; Murphy;
Siegel; Whelan; Wormser

Holidays: Coil

Holocaust: Greenfeld

Holocaust-fiction: Atlan

Horses-fiction: Kirkland

Immigration: Murphy

Ireland-folklore: Hodges

Japan-folklore: San Souci

Jews-stories: Oberman

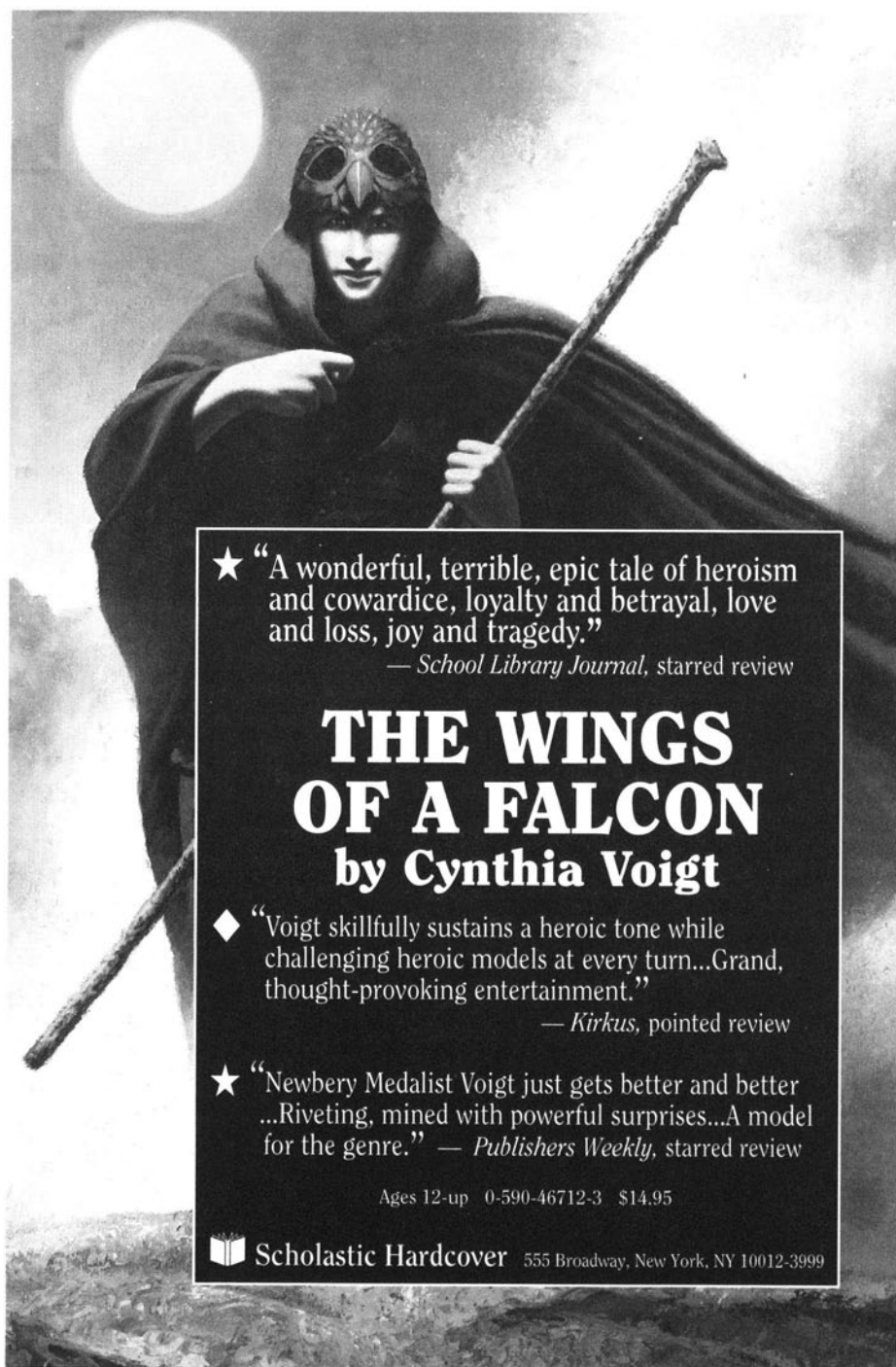
Latinos-stories: Dorros

Literature, children's: Mark;
Stevenson

Mardi Gras: Coil
 Middle Ages: Fradon
 Migrant workers—stories: Dorros
 Monsters—stories: Zeman
 Mythology: Sutcliff; Zeman
 Native Americans: King;
 Littlechild; Roessel; Wolfson
 Native Americans—fiction: Whelan
Nature study: Brooks; Durell;
 Farentinos; Guiberson; Lauber;
 Sobol; Wolfson
 Pioneer life: Whelan
 POETRY: Angelou; Willard
 Rabbits—stories: Denim
 Railroads: Murphy
Reading aloud: Cohn; Mark;
 Sutcliff; Willard
Reading, beginning: Random
Reading, easy: Donnelly;
 Hoffman; Honeycutt; Kramer;
 Whelan
Reading, family: Cohn; Durell;
 Feelings; Random
Reading, reluctant: Donnelly;
 Kramer; MacDonald; Paulsen;
 Scott
Religious education: Oberman
 Russia: Kendall
Safety education: Donnelly
 Saints—stories: Hodges

Scarecrows—stories: Rupert
 SCARY STORIES: MacDonald
 Seals: Sobol
 Ships: Platt
 SHORT STORIES: MacDonald;
 Mark; Stearns
 Sisters—fiction: Bauer
Social studies: Dorros; Kendall;
 Leventhal; Raimondo
 South Africa—stories: Rupert
Story hour: Cohn; Denim;
 Dorros; Garner; Hodges;
 Kalman; Lauber; Leventhal; San
 Souci; Seibold; Shannon;
 Zeman
 Suffrage—fiction: Duffy
 Tibet: Raimondo
Transportation: Haseley
 Trees: Lauber
 Uncles—fiction: Coman
 United States—folklore: Cohn
 Vietnam War: Wormser
 War: Haseley; Platt
 War—fiction: Lisle
 West, The: Greenlaw
 Witches—fiction: Tarr
Women's studies: Duffy
 World War II: Greenfeld





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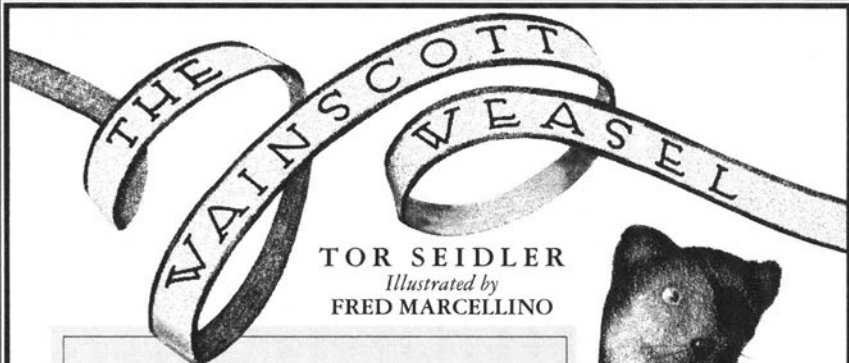
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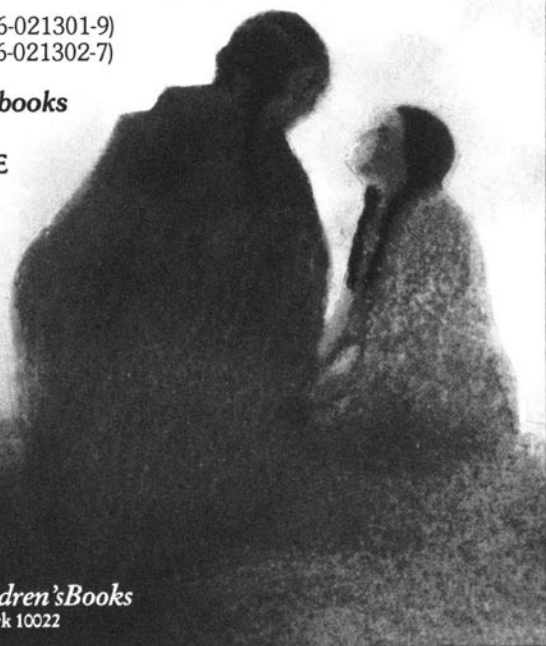
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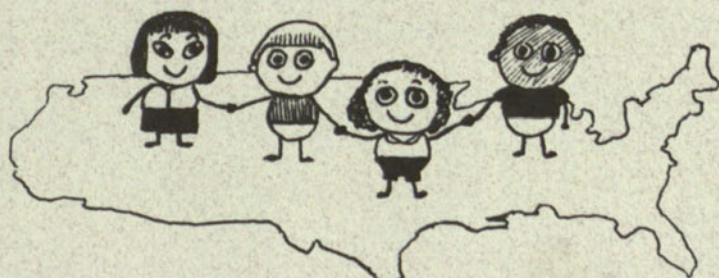
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Edited by Karen Patricia Smith

in *LIBRARY TRENDS* (41:3) WINTER 1993

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